

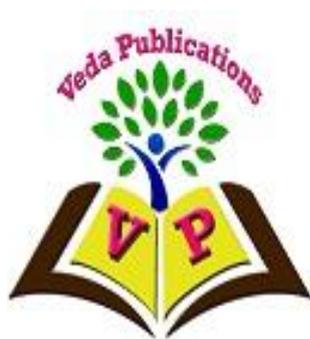


THE USE OF LITERATURE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: AN OVERVIEW

Syamala Ghantasala

(Lecturer in English, Department of English, Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada.)

ABSTRACT



The past decade witnessed a rise in interest in the way literary texts can be employed with the language learner. Literature in language classroom offers ample opportunities for learners to criticize, rationalize and reflect. Students' active participation can make a language classroom interesting and stimulating. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how literary texts are employed to improve the English language among students. Apart from this, the present article also presents various facets of literature methods based on theories. The use of literature in the language classroom can evoke powerful emotional responses from the learners. It would help them to know the culture of different countries. Literature in the language classroom would pave way for excellent group work where interaction plays a vital role.

Keywords: *Literature, Language Classroom, Interaction, Literary Texts.*

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Literature is an expression of emotions and thoughts in word form. It is a realm which reflects dreams, fears and perceptions. It can also be understood as a field of study which would instigate specific feelings among its readers. It is universally accepted that there is an inexplicable link between language and literature. Literature is represented by language and it stands for one of the frequent uses of language. The use of literature in the language classroom is not a novel concept but has been in vogue for many years. Literary texts were adopted by

various methods of teaching foreign language. In the grammar translation method, literature played a crucial role. Literary texts of the target language were exposed to the learner orally and translated where emphasis was more on the structure. The theme is not given due importance and attention was paid to rules of grammar. This method faded in due course of time and literary texts were no longer used in a language classroom. Literature was rejected as an aid in the structural approaches to language teaching since it indicated the traditional methods. Literature



was disregarded by functional-notional method as utmost attention is paid to the communication and authentic materials were used as tools for language teaching.

Of late, there is a shift to literature in the language classroom because it has proved that literary texts are used to develop communicative competence among the learners. Authors like Brumfit, Lazar contend that there is no particular academic language as such and the language used in literary texts is simple and plain language with stylistic and linguistic features like imagery, symbolism, similes, metaphors etc. These features are not limited only to literature but these features can figure in everyday language too.

Literature can be used as a second language tool on the grounds that it helps the learner with real examples of language and also a cross section of styles, types of texts and language styles. It is essential for a foreign language learner to understand these features and also the reason for using them. A learner should acquaint himself with not only the linguistic significance of these features but also its social function. In other words, the contents should be contextually suitable and linguistically appropriate with reference to its subject matter and form and thereby enhancing communicative competence.

A literary text can be understood in various ways and gives rise to several views among the learners which is followed by a lively discussion on the text, with their companions in the class and with the teacher. The foundation of the communicative approach is interaction. Language is learnt effectively through interaction. Thus in a language classroom, learner is active and the literary text becomes the focal point. Learners become enthusiastic, independent and crucial to the process of learning. Literary text would also help the learner to know about the culture of the country whose language they are trying to learn.

A literary text exposes the genuine emotions of the author and acts as a source of inspiration to the learners. If a learner is moved by the subject and inspired, he/she will afford to connect what he/she is reading to her experience, to what she/he undergoes and perceives. A language teacher should be able to

outline activities so as to elicit responses from the learners and literature has a strong influence on the minds of the learners because it is connected to personal experience.

The objective of using literature in a language classroom is that intercommunication among the students is possible which in turn can boost their communicative competence and can also make an everlasting impression on them. It also increases the interpretative capacity of the learners and also a learner centred situation is created. A number of classroom activities can be devised based on literary texts which would kindle interest in them. It covers every human predicament, contention and creates an enthusiasm among the learners to know the structure of the text. The learners are expected to respond to the text in relation to their personal encounters. The aim of using literature is to highlight the constructive contributions of a literary text since it exposes the learner to various forms of linguistic registers, kinds of language use.

As a result, the language classroom turns out to be vibrant and responds with audacity and interest. The conversational nature of literary texts results in individual learner's answers that demand the use of his /her artistic potential, that is, through language. In such an environment there is no scope for dullness in a language class and moreover, it provides a chance for the teacher to expand the domain of language use for the students.

The use of literature in a language classroom exposes the learners to a storehouse of knowledge and learning, the finest that has been meditated and identified within a culture. Through literature students get acquainted with the milieu of a particular literary text and at the same time they have an opportunity to acquaint themselves about historical, social and political conditions of the country expounded in the text. When the students go through this, they express their perception by acknowledging principles and beliefs, wisdom, customs, emotion and creativity within the legacy of the literature of such cultures furnishes.

Another objective of a teacher's inclination towards a language model for teaching literature is to provide students knowledge with an idea of the more fine-drawn and diverse prolific uses of language. One



of the main reasons of language-centered literature teaching is to assist students discover ways into a text in a systematic way and for themselves. When students develop their reading abilities they will recognize a literary text as literature. The use of literature in language classroom also helps students to involve themselves in the reading of literary texts. This would guide students to read literature more efficiently which in turn would help them to be wise and sagacious as individuals and also to establish good relationships in the society they live in. In order to achieve this aim, the teacher should take care to choose texts to which students can react and to which they can their conceptions and creativity in an innovative way.

It can be concluded that literary texts inspire students to develop three fundamental language skills: reading, writing and speaking. Before handling a literary text, a teacher should do some groundwork by designing activities that will enable students to promote their level in these three basic skills. The teachers should always remember that these activities should suit the needs of the students.

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